

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Previously Presented) A method of selecting from a plurality of modes of communication, comprising:

inputting a first party's ability to communicate with a second party;

evaluating a cost effectiveness of a mode of communication of said modes of communication based on said first party's ability to communicate, wherein said modes of communication comprise at least two of telephone, facsimile, hard copy mail, electronic mail, and at least one on-line communication arrangement, and wherein said evaluating comprising:

inputting said first party's ability into a decision tree,

determining a cost of establishing and maintaining said mode of communication,

determining a savings associated with said mode of communication, and

comparing said cost to said savings to calculate a return on investment associated with said establishing and said maintaining of said mode of communication;

repeating said evaluating for a different mode of communication of said modes of communication if said first party's ability does not match a mode of communication of said modes of communication previously evaluated; and

implementing a mode of communication of said modes of communication when said first party's ability matches a mode of communication of said modes of communication.

2. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 1, wherein a substance of said modes of communication comprise at least one of purchase order and billing communications between a

purchasing corporation and a supplier.

3. (Original) The method in claim 2, wherein said first party comprises said supplier and said second party comprises said purchasing corporation.

4. (Canceled).

5. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 1, wherein said decision tree orders modes of communication that are evaluated by their cost effectiveness to the second party.

6. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 1, further comprising before said implementing, performing a cost-benefit analysis with respect to a mode of communication matching said first parties ability.

7. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 6, wherein said cost-benefit analysis compares the cost of establishing a matching mode of communication to the cost of a next mode of communication.

8. (Previously Presented) A method of selecting from a plurality of modes of communication comprising:

inputting a first party's ability to communicate with a second party;

evaluating a cost effectiveness of a standard mode of communication of said modes of

communication based on said first party's ability to communicate, wherein said modes of communication comprises at least two of telephone, facsimile, e-mail, hard copy mail, and at least one on-line communication arrangement, and wherein a substance of said mode of communication comprises at least one of purchase order and billing communications between a purchasing corporation and a supplier;

repeating said evaluating for a non-standard mode of communication of said modes of communication if said first party's ability does not match a standard mode of communication of said modes of communication previously evaluated, wherein said non-standard mode of communication has a cost above said standard mode of communication, and wherein said evaluating comprises:

inputting said first party's ability into a decision tree,

determining a cost of establishing and maintaining said non-standard mode of communication,

determining a savings associated with said non-standard mode of communication, and

comparing said cost to said savings to calculate a return on investment associated with said establishing and said maintaining of said non-standard mode of communication;

performing a cost-benefit analysis with respect to a mode of communication of said modes of communication matching said first party's ability; and

implementing said non-standard mode of communication when said first party's ability matches said non-standard mode of communication and said cost-benefit shows said non-standard mode of communication is justified.

9. (Cancelled).

10. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 8, wherein said first party comprises said supplier and said second party comprises said purchasing corporation.

11. (Canceled).

12. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 8, wherein said decision tree orders modes of communication that are evaluated by their cost effectiveness to the second party.

13. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 8, wherein said cost-benefit analysis compares the cost of establishing a matching mode of communication to the cost of a next mode of communication.

14. (Previously Presented) A program storage device readable by machine tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for selecting from a plurality of modes of communication, said method comprising:

inputting a first party's ability to communicate with a second party;

evaluating a cost effectiveness of a mode of communication of said modes of communication based on said first party's ability to communicate, wherein said modes of communication comprise at least two of telephone, facsimile, hard copy mail, electronic mail,

and at least one on-line communication arrangement, and wherein said evaluating comprising:

- inputting said first party's ability into a decision tree,
- determining a cost of establishing and maintaining said mode of communication,
- determining a savings associated with said mode of communication, and
- comparing said cost to said savings to calculate a return on investment associated with said establishing and said maintaining of said mode of communication;

repeating said evaluating for a different mode of communication of said modes of communication if said first party's ability does not match a mode of communication of said modes of communication previously evaluated; and

implementing a mode of communication of said modes of communication when said first party's ability matches a mode of communication of said modes of communication.

15. (Previously Presented) The program storage device in claim 14, wherein a substance of said modes of communication comprise at least one of purchase order and billing communications between a purchasing corporation and a supplier.

16. (Original) The program storage device in claim 15, wherein said first party comprises said supplier and said second party comprises said purchasing corporation.

17. (Canceled).

18. (Previously Presented) The program storage device in claim 14, wherein said decision

tree orders modes of communication that are evaluated by their cost effectiveness to the second party.

19. (Previously Presented) The program storage device in claim 14, further comprising before said implementing, performing a cost-benefit analysis with respect to a mode of communication matching said first parties ability.

20. (Original) The program storage device in claim 19, wherein said cost-benefit analysis compares the cost of establishing a matching mode of communication to the cost of a next mode of communication.

21. (Previously Presented) The method in claim 1, wherein said evaluating and said implementing of said mode of communication comprises evaluating and implementing at least one of telephone, facsimile, e-mail, hard copy mail, and at least one on-line communication arrangement.

22. (Previously Presented) The program storage device in claim 14, wherein said mode of communication comprises at least one of telephone, facsimile, e-mail, hard copy mail, and at least one on-line communication arrangement.